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SOME RECENT FICTION.¹

I.

When a book is much spoken of, there is, as a rule, much good in it. Miss Harraden's "Ships that Pass in the Night" has been more spoken of than any book that has appeared since "Robert Elsmere"; and there is much that is good in it. Nevertheless we do not like it. The study of disease is an admirable pursuit in many ways, but it is not pleasant; neither is "Ships that Pass in the Night." Interest of character the book possesses in a high degree. We become personally acquainted with Bernardine, and regard The Disagreeable Man with mingled affection and abhorrence. We have met people like the care-takers, and we compare our friends and acquaintances with them. We admire the descriptions of Swiss peasant life, and, though we know nothing about it, we think they are true to nature. But there was much sound sense in the action of Father Abraham in the parable, who, being unable to help Dives in torment because of the great and impassable gulf between them, discreetly refused to trouble about his case; and the same sound sense characterizes those who refuse to read this book. The character drawing is excellent, and the style clear and concise, but the characters are diseased, and the style one that heightens their keen suffering by describing it with touches of humor. So much has been said of the book that it is needless to say more, except

¹ *Ships that Pass in the Night*, by Beatrice Harraden; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. *In Varying Moods*, same author and publishers. *Salem Kittredge and Other Stories*, by Bliss Perry; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. *A Gentleman of France*, by Stanley J. Weyman; New York: Longmans, Green & Co. *Under the Red Robe*, same author and publishers. *The Raiders*, by S. R. Crockett; New York: Macmillan & Co. *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills*, same author and publishers. *Red Cap and Blue Jacket*, by George Dunn; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

that, on closing it, we feel irritation at the death of Bernardine. The irritation is, perhaps, unreasonable, for it is artistically necessary that Bernardine should die in order that *The Disagreeable Man* may be shown bearing bravely a greater suffering than any he has known before, but the death is so sudden and so utterly unnecessary from any other point of view that we are annoyed at it. Death comes that way now and then in real life, and there are few books in which one is interested enough to be annoyed by the ending; but, while in real life we accept our fate and trust God or not, as we choose, in the mimic life of a novel we blame the writer who deals out misery instead of happiness, and gives death when he might give life. The mood of the book is painful, for it is hopeless, and hopelessness bravely borne is less inspiring than hope bravely won.

Turning from "*Ships that Pass in the Night*" to "*In Varying Moods*," we find with surprise that Miss Harraden can write healthily as well as charmingly. "*At the Green Dragon*," the longest of the short stories that make up this volume, sets before us characters as vivid as *The Disagreeable Man*, and infinitely more manly and healthy. The best book about invalids suffers from the disadvantage of being about invalids, but the people one sees at "*The Green Dragon*" are sound and healthy-souled, and the light in which they are seen is clear and not hard. The story is interesting, pleasant, and restful, and ought to add to the writer's reputation. This cannot be said of the other stories, all of which have Miss Harraden's charm of manner and limpid style, but lack that originality which has made her famous. Perhaps it is a minor fault that the ending of most of them can be inferred from the first or second page, but a fault it is, and one which unpleasantly recalls stories and novels far below Miss Harraden's level. There is no theology in "*At the Green Dragon*," and its absence removes a certain nebulous dogmatism which disfigures some of the other tales. When a scientist has reason to think that an accepted theory is false, he speaks in cautious and guarded

terms, for while he knows that it is right to speak, he knows also that he may be mistaken in his criticism. We have no desire to see the scientific method imported into the short story, but when Miss Harraden has reason to think that so well established a theory as that of revealed religion is false, it is to be regretted that her statements on this point are not more guarded than they are in "The Painter and His Picture" and "An Idyl of London."

When one stands in a large public library and watches the crowd taking out new books, it is amusing to see how many look at and then refuse volumes of short stories. A loud-voiced woman in the crowd explained this once by saying that the stories "had either been published in the magazines, and then you had read them, or they had not been published and then they weren't worth reading," and the bystanders seemed to agree with her. The pieces that make up the volume entitled "Salem Kittredge and Other Stories," by Bliss Perry, have been published in the magazines and we have read them before. Of course, there are some things that bear reading twice—the title story, "Salem Kittredge," is among these, but there are few that will bear much examination. It is doubtless from a recognition of this fact that the genius of the race has invented the paper-backed novel, which wears out after one reading, or, at most, two. "Salem Kittredge and Other Stories" should have been published as a paper-backed novel. To use the shibboleth of reviews, the book is worth reading, but it is hardly worth setting on one's shelf and taking down and reading again. The stories are not important enough to warrant preservation either on account of their plot or on account of their style. They are well told, but not told with that genius which makes a trivial incident noteworthy. With the exception of "At Sesenheim," in which the characters suffer from a lack of definiteness, they are good in many ways, but not remarkably good in any way. The most vigorous of them all, "The Commonest Possible Story," has some frank reminiscences of Kipling. The book compels

praise and interest, but the praise is not loud nor the interest intense.

The romance of youth has been exploited in many novels of many times and lands, while the romance of middle age is seldom depicted. Yet, after all, the latter possesses the greater interest, as noonday gives a better light than sunrise. To live and die a gentleman, to do nothing common or mean, to keep one's honor untarnished like a fine steel blade of Damascus, is noble in the sight of man, and in God's sight must have a sad dignity all its own, inasmuch as it holds an ideal higher than life or death or any other accident of the universe. Such a life is that of the *Sieur de Marsac*, preëminently a good man, a man who appeals to us because he is crowned with thorns and girdled with infirmity, a man well worthy of man's friendship and woman's love. When plot grows misty and style has lost its charm, there is left upon us the impression of a matchless character, which is summed up in the title, "*A Gentleman of France*." The book that bears this title has many defects, not the least of which is the commonplace nature of the plot, which is merely the rescue of a distressed damsel, ending in the usual love-making and marriage. The rescue gains dignity from its connection with the great deeds of Henry of Navarre, whose greatness is not suffered to overshadow the other actors in the drama. The treatment of this hero is perhaps as good as we could expect, but provokes the question, when will the historical novelists take some great historic character and explain the motives of his well-known but hitherto unexplained actions? This, if well done, were great historical romance.

There are good fights in "*A Gentleman of France*." In these piping times of peace not one in a hundred of us has seen a good fight, and that is why we are so eager to read of one. The old instinct still lives within us, and this is the nearest we can come to satisfying it. Especially notable is the encounter at the close of the story, with the ring of eager faces round the great inn room and the black impassive mask

pressing back the Italian captain, while the great lords watch and bet. Very different, but equally vivid, is the scene where the starving gentleman faces the groups of courtiers in the king's ante-chamber as they jeer at his shabby coat—a sordid adventure in its way, yet big with human suffering. *Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.* And then the love story! The love-making of a middle-aged man and a young girl, one would think, must be perilously near the comic. Yet the story of Ulysses and Nausicaa was not, nor is this. Out of surprisingly common, almost laughable materials, the author has constructed a love tale that is neither laughable nor common. We may say the same thing of the whole of the plot:—out of the usual incidents, the usual reflections, nay, even the usual speeches, Mr. Weyman has made a story that is new, and sweet, and wholesome, pervaded throughout by the grave courtesy of the “Gentleman of France,” the Sieur de Marsac; and in one scene, the meeting of mother and son, he has risen out of the common and drawn a picture that has rarely or never been drawn before, a picture of hard and biting irony, gloomy and terrible, lit with the light of love.

The title “Under the Red Robe,” though picturesque, is decidedly ambiguous. What it means is that Gil de Berault is an agent of Cardinal Richelieu, an agent who is given dirty work to do and does it because he has passed his word, but having done it, upsets it all and leaves matters as they were before, for he was once a gentleman. Since he has been an unfaithful agent, he can redeem his honor in only one way; he takes that way and surrenders himself to Richelieu for punishment. His punishment and the end of the story we will not tell, for the interest of the book lies in the plot, and it is possible that some who read this notice may care to read the book. The tale has abundance of dramatic interest and would make a good play, as would all of Mr. Weyman's romances. This, however, is better adapted to the stage than the others as it possesses a coherence and unity which they seem to lack. Gil de Berault is

a gambler, a bully, and a spy, yet Mr. Weyman, who is fond of doing things that are apparently impossible, has made him dignified and heroic. In this particular we are reminded of that admirable romance in which, if we remember, our author won his spurs, "The House of the Wolf." Certainly this last named volume and the two we have just praised, form a trio of delightful historical romances and give Mr. Weyman a position as a writer which we hope he will not undermine by too rapid publication. His style in all his books is simple and clear and changes with subject and character. There is no ornament or luxuriance; the chief end is the story, and every incident contributes to it so cunningly that there seems to be almost too much *curiosa felicitas*, which, however, is a welcome contrast to the careless construction of the ordinary novel. Indeed Mr. Weyman, with his air of self-restraint and repression, is a storyteller *par excellence* rather than a novelist.

Among the ingredients that make up the interest of a work of fiction, the greatest is, probably, character-painting. This Mr. Crockett's "The Raiders" possesses in a marked degree. Men have not so lived and breathed on paper since Dickens died, unless it be in "Kidnapped" or "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." But the book is more than a picture-gallery of characters. It is a story of adventure, a story of smugglers and pirates, gypsies and cattle stealers. There is a constant suggestion of "Lorna Doone," which arises, probably, from the presence of like elements in the composition of the stories. In both there is the juxtaposition of hard, cruel, merciless men, and a loyal, simple-minded, gentle, but heroic woman. Native nobility of soul and ingenuousness are pitted against craft and violence, and come off victorious. In both there is a sweet and charming love story, but the heroine of "The Raiders" is below Lorna Doone, as the hero is below John Ridd. Both stories contain delightful pictures of the life of simple country people, both are redolent of animal life, the stall and the byre, both smell of the soil. The books belong to the same class. They do for

historical fiction what John Richard Green did for history, they take us away from castle and court, council-chamber and battle-field, and let us see the common people of the time, their way of life and way of thought, their passions and pastimes, their codes of honor and morality, and the passing effects which great events have on their lives. The characters in "The Raiders" are Scotch to the core, Scotch in their lawlessness and superstition, Scotch in their love of home and their fierce determination to hold their own. The book has a true ring about it. Its sententious moralizing might be tiresome if it were not so humorously veracious. It has caught not only the tone of the times it depicts, but something of that tone of all time of which Defoe is the great master.

Form and proportion the book has not, and many threads pass out of the story and are not woven in at the end. The style is best described by Scotch adjectives, and plenty of them. It is "douce," and "braw," and "canny," and "gleg," but it is not classical. After character-drawing its most striking qualities are dramatic power and humor. Failing as it does in form, it must necessarily fail in dramatic unity, but there is strength and vividness in all the scenes. From the first chapter, where May Mischief, having saved the gawky lad Patrick, expects him to kiss her, and, being disappointed, turns on him the torrent of her scorn, and the second, where John Heron says: "Aweel no, I am no a man to make a to-do about deein. I bid ye guid nicht, my son Patrick," and so passes as one might fall asleep,—to the end when John Faa, belted earl of Scotland and wandering gypsy, rides with Patrick Heron into the old home of the Maxwells, this dramatic power never fails or falters.

But the humor! We have kept the best wine to the last. Many books have gone through many editions by reason of their humor alone, and yet been poorer than this. With a smile on his lip and a sadness striving with the twinkle of his eye, Patrick Heron, of Rathan, looks out on life and

tells of the sunny side of it; and all who love the sunshine would do well to hearken.

"Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills" is an uncanny story. On a summer day in June, Sir Uchtred, of Garthland, took horse and rode with his dare-devil troopers at his back "to turn out of his kirk and manse Alexander Renfield, the minister of Kirkchrist, whom the people loved." The congregation were assembled and listening to their preacher, when Uchtred rode, armed as he was, into their midst. Renfield was haled from the pulpit, shutting the door as he came down till "the Lord should send a man to open it," which a curate essaying to do a year after, "was hindered by a spirit that withstood him, and perhaps also by the memory of the curse of Alexander Renfield, for all the people of Kirkchrist held him to be a prophet. *And when out of liquor all the curates were very superstitious.*" In language of almost weird power the author tells how the church was shut up and the goods of the manse piled on the green and fired. Then the minister spoke and cried upon the Lord to judge between them and to lay low this belted knight, even as Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was laid low. And immediately the prayer was heard, for "as a strained fiddle-string snaps, so a chord twanged in his head," and Sir Uchtred fell to the ground in madness, and that night, and for three years thereafter, he roamed the mountains, mother-naked, distraught, and wild as the wild beasts. Perhaps the most terrible chapters in the book are those that describe the wild-cat Belus watching Sir Uchtred's sleep, and how his half-brother hunted the madman with dogs over the mountains. Throughout there is the power of striking imagination, but the narrative bears marks of haste, and is marred by crudity and lack of form. A circus-rider can ride three horses at once, but no man can write three novels at once, as Mr. Crockett has apparently tried to do in the last few months at the bidding of his publishers. Still, under any circumstances, the author of the "Stickit Minister," that admirable collection of short stories,

sketches, and pastels, of "The Raiders", and of "Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills," is one of the most potent literary forces that the latter-day critic has to reckon with.

"Red Cap and Blue Jacket" is an interesting story, and one does not want to lay it down. Andrew Prosser is a pleasant man to meet, and some of the other characters are well drawn. The villain, Lord Wimpole, is not a villain after all, but a man of parts and wit, who, realizing that false ambition has led him astray, turns from the error of his ways and struggles out of the mire. There is much healthy humor in the book, and the contrast between the proud gaiety of the French nobility during the Reign of Terror, the canny wit of the imprisoned Scotchman, and the white, still wrath of the English lord, is excellent. But Mr. Dunn overwhelms us with oppressive incident. So many things happen and happen so quickly, so many catastrophes grow out of each other like luxuriant tropical plants, so many seeming plausibilities are found to be rank improbabilities, so much ill-suited material, in short, is used in the construction of plot and incident, that one feels a sense of barbaric profusion, not of pearl and gold, but of point lace and rapiers, broad swords and diamonds. Treachery and murder, smugglers' sea fights and press-gangs, the French Terror in Paris and out of it, rescues of distressed ladies, thrilling escapes on land and sea, remind one of boyhood's dime novels. Enough is as good as a feast, but Mr. Dunn has spread several feasts and intermingled them. In this exotic profusion the sharpness of separate incidents is lost. There are scenes in the book as tragic as Hugo's in their possibilities, but the possibilities are not worked out. The narrative hints at them and hurries on. There are farce scenes that might be keen comedy, but there is no time for the presentation. "Red Cap and Blue Jacket" uses the possibilities of the historical romance to the full in providing incident, but uses them very little in providing anything else.

JOHN FEARNLEY.

II.

Much has been said of late about the "place of the novel," the "function of the novel," the artistic sin of using the novel as anything but a vehicle for amusement. And all to little purpose, for in this utilitarian age a thing is going to be used where it will pay best, and if it pays to have science, or theology, or politics, or morals, or immorals, sugar-coated in novels, the process will go on, even if, as the great Mulvaney says, "every commandment (of art) is broken between daylight and dark." Hence these few remarks will be confined to the novel as it is, and not as it should be.¹

Miss Lyell's "Doreen" is an example of politics done into fiction. Besides the heroine, Doreen, who has a large family of small brothers and sisters to support, there is a rich and high-born lover, with a marvellously placable mother; a murderer to be concealed, a French valet-villain, an all-round New England servant, and a host of obliging friends, whose whole object in life seems to be to help the heroine. Further, there is a legend and a ghost; but to say *a* ghost, is to be more than moderate, for all through the book we meet with apparitions from "Donovan," from "A Hardy Norseman," from "Knight Errant," until we feel as if we were groping in the dim reaches of Hades. The story deals with the Irish question in various costumes. That is to say, the dress of the heroine is as carefully and incessantly kept before the public as her politics.

She enters the story, as a child, in a red cloak, singing a rebel song. She is always singing rebel songs, for her plan is to sing the English nation into a proper view of the Irish question. She sings through elections in a green plush

¹ *Doreen*, by Edna Lyell; Longmans, Green & Co. *What Necessity Knows*, by L. Dougall; Longmans, Green & Co. *The Flower of Forgiveness*, by Flora Annie Steel; Macmillan & Co. *Marcella*, by Mrs. Humphry Ward; Macmillan & Co. *The Prisoner of Zenda*, by Anthony Hope; Henry Holt & Co. *A Change of Air*, same author and publishers. *The Wings of Icarus*, by Laurence Alma Tadema; Macmillan & Co. *Quaker Idyls*, by Sarah M. H. Gardner; Henry Holt & Co.

cloak, through groans and hisses at Albert Hall in white poplin, through a city dinner in white silk; goes to the concealed murderer in white silk and Niphetos roses, to a sick child in pink silk, to the funeral of her lover's mother in black serge; she is arrested in a fur cloak, in a shawl she lays the chief ghost, she goes to her lover in prison in a jacket and hat. It is to be hoped that, when her real end comes, she dies in an ordinary night-gown. What she accomplishes for Ireland, except the winning of her lover to the Home Rule party, is not very clearly demonstrated, but the story leaves the Prime Minister making Home Rule speeches, leaves the hero and the heroine and their baby, who also sings rebel songs, turning their country house into a convalescents' home (for English people, however), where the old maids of this and the author's other stories, who failed to marry this and other heroes, find their vocations.

Miss Dougall's "What Necessity Knows" is hard to classify. It does not deal with science, or politics, or morals, or theology. It cannot be called didactic, and is surely not amusing. The story opens on a Canadian lumber place, where a young and red-headed woman is disputing with a middle-aged and rough lumberman as to the disposal of the body of the red-headed woman's father. This very unfilial heroine is anxious to go along with the corpse, which has to be taken away for burial, and so reach the outer world. The man insists that she must remain in the wilderness and marry him. The dispute is ended by the red-headed young woman's retiring to the room where her father lies in a roughly made and carelessly closed coffin. She solves the problem by dragging the corpse out and dropping it into a gulch behind the house, we are not told how, and putting herself into the coffin. The coffin is then carted away to a desolate railway station, where the heroine terrifies the agent by a resurrection scene, and escapes. She stops a train by a fire on the track, and so reaches what the author seems to call civilization. This is

the best part of the book, even though we cannot find anything morally or physically admirable in any of the characters. The picture of the sleepy passengers in the stopped train is too accurately done — the unhappy reader is made to smell the bad air and see the ugly people in all the contorted and painful positions overwheeled humanity takes in unconscious sleep. This is not art, it is commonplace photography, which is neither elevating nor amusing. Reaching the crude, small town, where for the future the story is laid, the red-headed young woman hires out as maid of all work to a family newly arrived from England. As was to be expected from a person of her push and energy, she very soon takes entire charge of this family, but, as was not to be expected from any description before given of her personal charms, she develops into a beauty. Very shortly she finds that the field presented by the English family is too small, and she carries her red head and her energy to the hotel of the town and takes charge of that. This varied and brilliant career, however, does the heroine little good, for after all she comes to the lame and impotent conclusion of marrying the original lumberman. Other characters are a too-smart young man from the States, an English clergyman risen from the lower classes, his brother, who clings to the trade of his father (butcher), and the English family above mentioned. The eldest daughter of the family, though said to be well-born, becomes quite intimate with the red-headed maid-of-all-work, and ends up by marrying the clergyman's brother, "the most fascinating of butchers." A crazy Adventist preacher fills out the list. The book strikes us as unlovely and sordid. If analyzed, strong scenes might be found, but one scarcely cares to take that trouble with a production which shows neither culture nor genius.

After Rudyard Kipling's revelation of life in India, one would take up with some reluctance, unless one knew the author beforehand, Mrs. Flora Annie Steel's volume of short stories bearing the title "The Flower of Forgiveness." Until the days of Kipling, and we gladly add of the author

under discussion, India "lay in darkness and the shadow of death." It was a misty land of Nabobs and livers, of orphans and Ayahs; a land full of the graves of actual parents and potential husbands; a land hung round with Victoria crosses and broken hearts. If ever an author needed an orphan hero or heroine, the parents were promptly buried in India. If ever an old maid of a type other than a pickled cucumber was needed, she came on the scene hung round with tiger teeth and claws, and in her sombre eyes and faithful-to-one-memory-and-one-love air, we easily read the story of the lover dead in India. If a hero was needed to electrify a county, and to marry the beautiful but poverty-stricken and much snubbed heroine, where could a more charming Lochinvar be found than in a Victoria-crossed soldier from India? Who can say what modern fiction owes to India, that long enduring land of curry, and mutiny, and mystery?

Under Kipling and our present author, the debt to India has been increased, and though it may still be to the novelist a "limbo large and broad" for supernumeraries, we think of it now as something quite near, and truly realize its beauties and its horrors.

In the story "For the Faith," the second in the volume under review, we catch many humorous glimpses of great truths. For instance, old Dhurm Singh's bewilderment over the picture cards and letters sent him from England by the evangelical maiden aunt of his young master, Sonny *baba*, urging him to "safeguard himself against certain damnation by becoming an infidel," is an admirable touch, and the old man, nibbling his opium and puzzling over these strange contradictions, is a pathetic comment on missionary zeal. Too respectful of his master's people to destroy the cards, and too orthodox to disseminate such things among the faithful, the old ex-soldier ties them up with his pension papers and hides them in his tunic. His young master's arrival as an officer in the Salvation Army is a great shock, but the old man tries to adapt himself.

The keen scent which the one-time servants of gentlemen have for people of a lower class, is clearly shown, bringing forcibly to mind the pride of the Southern slave in his master's standing, his anxious care for the well-being of his master's children, and his scorn for the *nouveau riche*.

Sonny *baba*, the ardent young missionary, learns much from the old servant, who endures patiently his master's objects in life — temperance, the conversion of the heathen, and the abolishing of the opium trade, looking on them as vagaries of youth. He saves his master's life with opium although he almost loses his own by keeping a promise not to use it. He, in turn, is saved by a Scotch physician who has much common sense and a great contempt for philanthropic fanatics, the gad-flies of every generation, whose fads are sometimes as disastrous as young physicians or as epidemics.

Many of these stories are terrible, as are Kipling's, always more terrible to the looker-on from above than to the actor. The English eye that sees, the English ear that hears, puts its own horror into the scene, that for the native is natural, commonplace.

Progress is life, and we are all, the whole of christendom, the outcome of missionary enterprise—we, the despised Gentiles! What imagination can picture the condition of the world but for the "Apostle to the Gentiles" and the lessons he taught? And yet, it must have been hard for those cultivated old gentlemen of Rome and Athens to put up with the crudities of the under-bred christians of that early day? St. Paul, of course, was an educated gentleman, but what was he among so many? Have we not a great contempt for the leveller who would have us treat the negro as our brother in deed as well as in word? And do we not carefully avoid the Salvation Army that fraternizes too comfortably with the gutter "four-hundred?" Do we not look on these iconoclasts of caste lines very much as old Dhurm Singh looked on his dear, but mistaken Sonny *baba*, or as Miss Raeburn and Mrs.

Boyce looked on the astonishing Marcella? Lady Winterbourne, "who was always trying to reconcile the ends of eternal justice with the measures of the Tory party," understood Marcella better, and yet suffered more with and through the girl than the mother did. Mrs. Boyce, however, having been wrecked, heart and soul, by the father of this elemental young woman, was not to be blamed for regarding the blood with doubtful eyes, nor for cultivating an aloofness from the same.

"Marcella" may be classified as socialism done into fiction, and, of course, well done. It is the strongest by far of the author's books. Without question, Mrs. Ward has the best right to know the English girl of to-day as she really is. That is to say, a woman of Mrs. Ward's ability must truly know her own kind in her own land. When, then, in presenting Marcella to the public, she at the same time introduces an Italian grandmother to account for Marcella's "passions," which "were half-civilized and Southern," we must believe that she knows what she is about. We, ourselves, have always thought that an Italian grandmother, or something of the kind, was necessary to an English girl who intended to be anything that was not well-bred and amiable. Of late we have been terribly shocked, we have been taken off our feet and carried out to sea, by the horrid flood of "Dodos," and "Yellow Asters," and "Superfluous Women." Rescue seemed almost hopeless, until in this Italian grandmother, deemed necessary in order to account for Marcella's vagaries, Mrs. Ward has thrown us a life line, and restored our belief in the English girl.

That Marcella is crude and trying, no one will deny, but what with murders, and hangings, and drunken rows, and horrid scamps, and other disappointments, she finally beats herself into very fine shape, and when all is over, eats her humble pie as only a noble nature could. Mrs. Boyce, though little seen and less conversed with, is a most remarkable character, put in with a few masterly strokes. Just as Robert Elsmere's mother, a happy-go-lucky old

Irish woman, stands out from the canvas, the best touch in all that book, because the most natural, so Mrs. Boyce stands before us, pathetic, rigid, aloof, the most artistic piece of work that Mrs. Ward has done.

One small factor in a great change, whether for the better or the worse God only can tell, Marcella strikes out recklessly, putting her high-strung self into the place of every poor creature whose life touches hers, and suffering far more acutely than their minds or nerves would ever permit them to suffer. Game and game laws seemed to her a vicious temptation, set up by the rich for the destruction of the poor. Yet, as young Leven said, "I don't steal their chickens; I buy the pheasant eggs, and I buy the pheasant hens to sit on them and the coops to rear them in,"—just as Smith or Jones might say, "I buy the eggs and the incubator and I will shoot any darkey I catch stealing my chickens." To us there seems to be as much justice in the one as in the other, and we are fain to say, as much sport. But not so Marcella, and she beat and tore not only herself, but all her friends against the customs and laws of ages. She does not realize that stealing is stealing, and murder is murder, and must be dealt with as such, nor does she realize that there is less need for either to-day than ever before in the history of the world. There has never been an age when man has been so truly "his brother's keeper;" when the purple-and-fine-linen of the earth have been so willing, nay, anxious, to step down into the dust of the highway and to lift up the "beasts of the people;" when the comfortless troubles of the poor were so realized and legislated for. Marcella saw more clearly when she looked up from the slums; then she was thankful for the beautiful homes and the good people—"it was good that there should be such places." Her restlessness made her leave them and go away, but she was glad to remember them.

"Marcella" is a book that makes one think and feel too much, perhaps, in these strenuous days when nerves are strained like fiddle-strings and played upon momentarily by

all the modern inventions for annihilating time and space—when the only hope of peace from world fairs, and expositions, and telephones, and electric cars, and all the other crazing machines and life-absorbents is a voyage in a sailing vessel or a journey across the desert on a camel. Barring these, the unstrung wretch of a worker should take up Anthony Hope's "Prisoner of Zenda." The size, the shape, the paper, print, and binding, are all delightful, while the matter is pure and unadulterated old-time fiction, free from introspection, or evolution, or science, or religion, or socialism, or environment, or politics, or theology, with never a reform or a prevention-to-anything society in sight, and only a touch on the blood-curdling subject of heredity. Just a smirch of it, sufficient to give the hero a red head and a long nose, a present from a grandmother who, though rickety in morals, must have been an interesting old person. The story is full of delightful murders and hair-breadth escapes and charming villains, with here and there a fair lady and a love scene, with here and there an apology for the mediæval or border method of insisting on law and order.

Beginning in the Park Lane of to-day, in half a dozen little pages we are landed in the Middle Ages, and only now and then are we shocked back to the nineteenth century by the mention of a railway train. But as a rule the characters tear about on horseback, and swim in moats, and clatter over draw-bridges, and draw swords and daggers in a way that brings back to us, as one strain can bring back the grand orchestra, the long-ago eagerness with which we read "Ivanhoe" and "Kenilworth," and lived every word of them. But through all this blood-on-the-moon activity there steals a silver shaft of light—a tender gleam of love that in the end proves to be "the love that loves alway." And the pathos of it lingers long after we have closed the book. "The Prisoner of Zenda," however, in spite of all its mediæval flavor, has about it the hurry of the day. Perhaps the day will have nothing slow, will not let any

man be the kind of king that Rudolf Rassendyll was, for more than three months, and the skilful author knows it.

In the companion volume by the same writer, "A Change of Air," we find a short biographical sketch, a picture of Anthony Hope, and the fact that his full name is Anthony Hope Hawkins. Mr. Hawkins was born in 1863, is the son of a clergyman, a graduate of Oxford, a lawyer with chambers in the Middle Temple, stood as Liberal candidate for Parliament, was defeated by Viscount Curzon, and wrote his first book in 1890. "A Change of Air" is his seventh and latest story, and is in marked contrast to "The Prisoner of Zenda." It is clever, but not as clever; it is humorous, bright, cheerful, and pathetic, but all in a less degree than the former book. Perhaps we think this because we are so accustomed to English country life as shown in books and so unaccustomed to the Kingdom of Ruritania. Perhaps it is because we read possible stories constantly and fairy stories never, that we are so charmed with "The Prisoner of Zenda." Be that as it may, there seems to be a glamour over the one that does not rest on the other. The characters in "A Change of Air" are admirably drawn, Philip Hume being the best, perhaps, the Mayor, Mrs. Hodges, and Johnstone coming very close on his heels. Tora Smith is better done, we think, than either Janet or Nellie, save at the end, where Nellie makes her confession. Roberts is put in as well as a Radical grown too radical, in short, a lunatic, can be, and the would-be murder and actual suicide grow well nigh humorous in his hands. The story moves easily, carries the reader along, and ends happily, so that, perhaps, it fulfils better than its companion volume the whole duty of the novel, for "The Prisoner of Zenda" ends with a touch of pathos that is rather keen to be amusing.

Too much cake is not wholesome, and to go through a pile of novels in order to review them is like stuffing cake without so much as a draught of water between the different loaves to clear the throat. But whether it be rich cake, or what, as children, we called "choke-cake," the imponder-

able choke-cake that was always declared to be best for children, we must go on with the feast, and it may be that toward the end we are too overfed to rise as we should on "The Wings of Icarus."

This book cannot be called "rich cake," and though it is better than choke-cake, it cannot be called grateful, or comforting, or nourishing. Perhaps it may have met with an accident in baking, or there was too much sugar, or something that should have been there to stiffen it was left out. We don't know, and cooking is such a mystery that perhaps we had better change our figure to something more simple. Perhaps we had better drop figures altogether, and quote the book, trying only not to make it into hash, the deepest mystery of all.

To begin at the end, the author tells the story of Icarus, saying: "Make unto yourselves wings and fly! My wings were strong, and should have borne me further; I fall and die, yet I have seen the sun." This sun of the heroine's was love, yet why she should have loved the man she did, is a mystery as deep as cooking or hash.

An assertion like this needs proof, so we will give some of Emilia's many descriptions of her Gabriel's ways and manners and personal appearance, and let the reader fall in love or not, as he or she sees best: "His nose is large, rather thin, and not straight; his mouth is large, but finely shaped; I think he smiles a little crookedly. Any way, his eyes are beautiful. They are set far apart and are strangely expressive. For the rest, he is more freckled than any one I ever saw, and his hair, which is of no particular color, is rather long and thrown off the temples, save for one lock that continually falls forward." Further, she says he was tall, slender, and awkward. This description is written to the heroine's friend, Mrs. Constance Norris, who is separated, not divorced, from her husband, and who, not loving her mother, gets, because of these facts, all Emilia's sympathy.

Emilia finds out that this Gabriel, whom, by the way, she

meets accidentally in a wood, has a father and maiden aunt near at hand in a cottage, and after she and he have met several times in the highways and hedges, she determines that it will be the correct thing for her to go and call on the aunt. In the garden of the cottage she meets a man whom she takes for an ill-dressed gardener. Notwithstanding this surmise, she shakes hands with him cordially, after he has scraped the earth off his fingers. He leads her into the house, and she discovers him to be Gabriel's father. The family are a trio of worn-out London people, who, having enough to feed themselves, and being perfectly certain that they have but one life, conclude that they would prefer to spend it in the country. The description of the disorderly house, reduced to this condition by the fact that each member of the household insists on being absolutely free, and of Emilia's reception, is good. She hears a scuffling sound as "of someone coming down stairs head foremost," and the hero appears. The aunt in turn squeezes the heroine's hand "as if it had been a sponge." They all retire to the kitchen, where they try to have tea, but as the tea is out, they have cocoa. "They ate voraciously, and we talked meanwhile in the silliest fashion, about nothing at all, laughing until the tears ran down our cheeks." "When we had done, Gabriel stood up, chair and all, and came beside me. 'What do you think of us,' he asked. 'Aren't we rather nice?'" Emilia answers with effusion that they are, and complains bitterly of her own orderly house and respectable family. When the hour for her departure comes, Gabriel is to see her home, and naturally, we think, looks for a hat, but Emilia knows him better than we do. "'Beloved aunt,' he cried, 'there used to be a hat somewhere!' I assured him that he need not discomfort himself for my sake, and he bounded forth bareheaded with a yell of exultation."

Before very long Emilia finds that Gabriel is a great poet and that she is in love with him. But do what she and the aunt will, Gabriel will not see this very patent fact. At

last she decides to leave Fletcher Hall, and goes to the cottage to say good-bye. This wakes Gabriel up, she stays, and they become engaged. After this the proprieties demand that Gabriel call on Emilia's uncle, so Emilia goes to the cottage to fetch him and has much to do to persuade him. Finally she sends him off to dress, and waits in the kitchen until he comes.

"There he stood without hat or gloves.

" 'I am ready,' said he.

" ' "You imp!" I cried; 'you've been playing about! What have you been at all this time? Do you suppose I can present such a scarecrow to my relations?'

" ' "Emilia," answered the poor dear very solemnly, 'I have washed!'"

But Emilia thinks this insufficient; and she, and the father, and the aunt turn in on the poor wretch, brushing and polishing him within an inch of his life; the heroine being obliged to "hold him down with both hands." When all is done, and we are feeling how tousled Emilia herself must look after this struggle, she longs to weep over her handiwork. " 'You poor dear!' I cried, 'Oh, Jane, doesn't he look horrible?'" The wedding day is fixed for the spring, but postponed until Gabriel finishes a poem. Meanwhile, Constance arrives, and after a little demur proceeds to fall in love with her dear Emilia's Gabriel. Let us suppose that Emilia has improved him somewhat. Emilia sees how matters are going, but stands to her guns, and in spite of a written agreement that she and Gabriel will not hold each other bound, even after marriage, if love ceases, she marries him out of hand, and they go away. At the end of a year, and of an illness, during which she has time to think better of it, Emilia brings him back, determined that Constance must be divorced from her husband and accept Gabriel. For pecuniary reasons, Constance's mother objects to the divorce, and Emilia has to leave that small item out of her scheme. But nothing daunted, she brings them together, joins their hands, then rushing out into the darkness,

lies down on the grass. After awhile she hears the other two fleeing from each other, then she goes to her home. About midnight she bethinks herself that Gabriel might commit suicide. She goes in search of him, and finds him at the cottage just in the act. She persuades him out of it, and after awhile they hunt up Constance. A note is found, then she is found, dead ; and Gabriel and Emilia separate on the spot.

As they were all "full blown infidels," thinking no more of suicide than ordinary people do of taking a pill, we do not understand why they did not have a suicide bee, and do the thing up artistically.

Of strange sentiments, and thoughts, and turns of expression, the book is full. Emilia is obliged to have family prayers. "I, infidel, read the prayers that are to strengthen the household through the day. When, at a given point, all the maid-servants rise, whirl round in their calico gowns, and turn their demure backs to me as they kneel in a row, I do not know whether to laugh or to cry." Of love, she says : "We are such fools, we women. When a man loves, he is all that he was, plus love ; when we love, we throw ourselves headlong into the flood, and are nothing that we were." And again : "You have never really loved any man, you ; so perhaps you don't know what it is to be afraid of your own eyes, because you feel that every time they rest on that thing you love, your poor heart runs and looks out of the window."

To say that the book is untrammelled, is to express very inadequately its jelly-fish constitution as to creeds and conventions. There is nothing stable anywhere in it. Nothing to help humanity to think a higher thought, or to breathe a purer breath, or to have one longing nobler than self-gratification. Nothing to help us even to a genuine laugh.

There are many things besides cooking that are mysteries to us, and one is Quakers. We may add that, since we have read "*Quaker Idyls*", we have no desire to extend our knowledge in that direction. The stories are

well told. It is the Quakers that are slow, unutterably slow. Of course, this does not preclude their being unutterably good, or their having an immense amount of thrifty common-sense ; but poetry, fancy, imagination, are all as absent as the bone was from Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

The "Ante-Bellum Letters" are the best things in the book, and though they give a rather blood-thirsty picture of the be-pistoled, be-knived, diabolical slave-holder, they also give an unbiased view of the thank-God-I-am-not-as-other-men abolitionist.

We, naturally, are not as sorry as "thy simple Sally" was that all of Boston was not of this type, some being wicked enough to stand by the Constitution, and not to look upon it as a "covenant with hell." Some people, also, were sufficiently depraved to play whist, and also to have brandy in their mince pies, and to call their servants "servants and not domestics." Indeed "simple Sally" does not feel herself in Boston until she goes to an anti-slavery fair, where she meets all the abolitionist leaders. But even here they have some worldly music, and Sally's pleasure is greatly tempered by her not being able to get a piece of "temperance mince pie," which we are free to think must have been very poor pies. Pies seem to have been Sally's secret sin, and we are tempted to sigh over her carnal mind. We are shocked, too, to find that on a very virtuous page Sally was not astonished when in the crowd some one seized her hand ; but, oh, fie, Sally ! "was very happy when I lifted my eyes and saw bending over me the familiar face of Edward H." "Picture it, think of it, dissolute man !" Sally, Sally ! You had better have eaten mince pies with brandy in them ; you had better have fallen to the depth of playing whist, or even poker : even a little worldly music, or a feather in your Sunday hat would have been better than surreptitious squeezing of hands in a crowd.

Still, as we are led to believe that "simple Sally" landed her "good Edward H.," not only in the true fold of temperance and the Republican party, but also in the labyrinth of

matrimony, we must close our eyes to this fall from grace. And after all "simple Sally" was a very nice girl. As we have said, it is the fault of the Quakers and not of the author, that these stories are not more thrilling. She has evidently done the best possible with her material, and as every class is now being studied and written about, we see no reason why the Quakers should not have their turn. At all events, "Quaker Idyls" is a wholesome little volume, and we feel that it would be a good thing if there were more Quaker-like sobriety in our latter-day writers.

SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT.